

A young boy with short brown hair, wearing a light blue denim button-down shirt, is playing a banjo. He is looking down at the instrument with a focused expression. The banjo has a white head and a dark fretboard with decorative inlays. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

KENTUCKY SCHOOL ADVOCATE

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THE SHOW GOES ON

Ice storm doesn't freeze
KSBA's annual conference

Town hall meetings for a school board

Homegrown field trips

Report cards go online

Scenes from KSBA's 73rd annual conference



(Clockwise starting top left) Kentucky Board of Education Chairman Joe Brothers of Elizabethtown, left, checks out Hardin County Schools' Share Your Success exhibit, staffed by Diane Jacobi, executive assistant to the superintendent, accompanied by her husband, Brian.

Humorist Carl Hurley kicks off conference with a laugh.

Exhibitors can learn from each other at KSBA's conference, as Jenni Molnar of Mimio demonstrates her company's electronic whiteboard for Matt Gumm, vice president of estimating for Alliance Corp.

Middlesboro Superintendent Darryl Wilder, left, Bell County Board of Education member Arlene Burnett and Glasgow Superintendent Kathy Goff chat between conference sessions.

Raceland-Worthington Independent school board members Sandy Loperfido, Don Nicholls, Jerry Epling and Steve Burkhardt pause outside the Galt House before heading to dinner.

Russell Independent Superintendent Dr. Susan Compton answers a question from Scott County board member Randy Mayo. Compton's district presented a session on creating professional learning communities.



FEATURES

Town hall talk

If you want to improve your district communications, you've got to be ready to deal with both the curve balls and the softballs – just as Oldham County's board team did when it threw open the doors in a series of town hall meetings ... Page 8.

It's in the cards

The state education department is taking expanded report card data and placing it online, removing a burden from local school districts. And as part of the Web-based move, basic report cards will no longer be mailed ... Page 9.

Not far afield trips

As districts and schools look at areas where they can save money, field trips are often on the chopping block. But some districts are finding that making do with the attractions closer to home isn't so bad ... Page 10.

Neither sleet, nor snow, nor ice

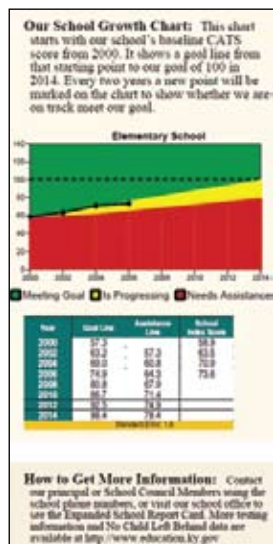
KSBA's 73rd annual conference was well-attended — ice storm and state of emergency notwithstanding. Most presenters and hundreds of school board members made the trip to Louisville. Complete conference coverage begins with its own index on Page 12.



Open for communication, Page 8



Ice, ice, baby, Page 12



Reporting on the Web, Page 9



Exploring your own backyard, Page 10

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On the cover



Spencer Lawson, a member of the Whitley County School musical group, the Colonel's Strings, plays the banjo during a reception at KSBA's annual conference in Louisville last month. Lawson is a fourth-grade student at Pleasant View Elementary. Conference coverage begins on Page 12.

TAKE NOTE

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Risky business
School leaders have two more chances to learn about the latest in risk management tools for their buildings. The daylong training, sponsored by Kentucky School Boards Insurance Trust and the Kentucky Center for School Safety, will be March 5 in Florence, with a repeat on March 12 in Bowling Green. Two identical sessions were held last November and December.

The training focuses on reducing several types of liability exposures, including crisis management, facility and playground safety, asbestos abatement and mold prevention and OSHA compliance.

The registration fee is \$30 and the event has been approved for EILA credit. For information on times, training sites and registration, please go to the “featured events” section at www.ksba.org.

Another one bites the dust

On the heels of the cancellation of the Teaching and Learning Conference, the state education department has axed the annual Parent Professional Conference due to fiscal restraints. The statewide event will be replaced by a series of regional mini-conferences. The Kentucky Depart-

ment of Education, 11 parent resource centers, family resource/youth service centers, the Kentucky Partnership for Families and Children, special education cooperatives, KY Spin and local school districts will work together to provide support and training. The state education department will post scheduling information on its Web site as it becomes available.

Revenue loss stemmed

The Kentucky Department of Revenue will not go along with a change in the way vehicles are valued for taxation. The change by the National Automobile Dealers Association created a new category for valuing vehicles. The revision would have resulted in an estimated 20 percent decrease in the overall value of vehicles in Kentucky – which in turn would have further reduced revenues to taxing bodies, including school districts.

The revenue department uses the association’s annual guide in valuing vehicles for taxation. But after initially signaling that the department expected local officials to use that new category, it issued a memo saying it will continue to use the same category it has been using for setting values on vehicles, thereby stanching the loss of local tax revenues. ☞

Limited access

The state Transportation Cabinet has capped the amount of money it provides to school districts to help build road access improvements to new schools. The agency works with school boards to define the scope and cost of the work needed to link new school sites with the state-maintained highway system. After that, the cabinet sometimes funds all or part of the improvements.

However, in a December 2008 letter to education leaders, Transportation Secretary Joseph Prather warned that due to increasing costs of such projects and declining revenues, the agency will limit its help to \$250,000 per school site. Even at that, the state may not be able to fund all requests during a fiscal year, he said.

Prather said his agency plans to dedicate a source of funds for these projects in the next biennial budget. “This will better define the total annual funding available for this purpose and set a reasonable target level of funding for school turn lanes, etc., each year,” he wrote.



A brief look back, a long view ahead

(Note: this column is excerpted from new President Delmar Mahan's remarks at this year's KSBA annual conference. Mahan, a member of the Whitley County Board of Education, spoke following the closing brunch keynote address by Abraham Lincoln presenter Jim Sayre of Lawrenceburg.)

When I was nominated to become president of KSBA, I had no idea I would have to follow two legends. How do you follow Abraham Lincoln on the stage? It can't be done.

Likewise, how do you follow Ed Massey as president? That's an impossible task. I cherish the past two years I've had to learn from Ed, watching him in constant motion. The Energizer Bunny has nothing on Ed Massey.

I'd like to tell you a little bit about myself and what public education has done for me.

I was born in 1956 at home in Whitley County, the fourth of five sons to Dennis and Anna Mae Mahan. By the time my father was 19, his father, mother, brother and sister had died, leaving him to feed and care for another brother and sister. He started working in the coal mines at age 13. He made it to the ninth grade before boarding a ship to north Africa in World War II. He passed away in 1995 but he is still with me today.

My mother was the third oldest of 10 children in her family. She helped her mother raise her brothers and sisters. My mother attended school until the fifth grade. She is still living and if there's ever been an angel on earth, it is her.

We lived in a home heated with two wood stoves and no indoor plumbing until my senior year in high school. We grew our food in the garden and raised livestock for our meat. Times were hard, but I have fond memories of my childhood.

But thanks to public education, I had the opportunity to attend school. I graduated from Whitley County High School and Eastern Kentucky University with a bachelor's degree in business education. I was the first person in my family to attain a college degree. For the past 25 years, I've worked for the accounting firm of Marr, Miller and Myers in Corbin.

I've been married 31 years to my high school sweetheart. My wife, Donna, a Whitley County graduate with degrees from the University of Kentucky and Eastern Kentucky University, works as a chemical dependency counselor at Baptist Regional Medical Center in Corbin.

Our three children, Josh, John and Joanna, are graduates of Whitley County High School. Because of the advantages



Outgoing KSBA President Ed Massey, right, introduces new President and Whitley County school board member Delmar Mahan to the KSBA membership assembled during the Business Session at last month's conference in Louisville.

public education gives to everyone, a generation removed from my mother and father, their grandchildren will include a Harvard law school graduate, a dentist and an educator of young minds as a teacher.

For the next two years, three areas will have my attention as your president.

The first, obviously, is public education. Public education is the opportunity provided by this great country to every child, no matter his or her background. We must continue to remind our political leaders that our resources must not be diverted into the private sector but must remain in public schools.

Another area of emphasis will be early childhood education. The sooner our children start in the classroom, the greater the chances they have to succeed. I know financial times are tough, but funds must be made available to fund all-day kindergarten and preschool programs. We must make our case to legislators to achieve the funding required.

The last area is KSBA itself. Yesterday (Executive Director) Bill Scott did an excellent job in giving our State of the Association update. Our position is stronger now than it has ever been. The association has developed into the primary resource for education leaders in Kentucky. That's due in large part to our staff. This staff has a defined mission, and that is to make you the best-qualified board member that you can be.

With the help of my good friend and our new president elect, Tom Blankenship, we will work diligently for you and this association.

I will do my best. I may not be smooth. I may not be polished. But I'm going to roll up my sleeves and do my best for our association for the next two years. ☘

Quotes on education from Kentucky and elsewhere

“One school has used a girl and another an African-American student for Lincoln. And I think Lincoln would have loved that, being a man for equality.” Richardsville Elementary (Warren County) music teacher and co-author Pam Thurman on the use by numerous Kentucky schools of the musical,



Photo provided by Warren County Schools

Abraham Lincoln: A man and his times. From the Bowling Green *Daily News*.

“Number one, districts will have to cut personnel and (there will be) fewer teachers in the classroom. That means increased class size. Teachers will not be able to have that intense focus on student learning for every student, and with the challenges that we have with trying to improve student achievement across our state, I think that it would have a very direct impact on us moving all students to proficiency by 2014.” Interim Education Commissioner Elaine Farris on the impact if the General Assembly and governor cut state funding to schools to cover the ongoing revenue shortfall. From the Frankfort *State Journal*.

“I have no idea if the tax is going to pass the General Assembly, but from my perspective, right now, it’s the only revenue-generating bill that’s got a chance. Without more revenue, every school district in the state will be hurting.” Ludlow Independent board Chairwoman Kym King on



the board resolution supporting Gov. Steve Beshear’s proposal to increase state revenues through higher tobacco taxes. From the Fort Mitchell *Kentucky Enquirer*.

“I’ve never seen so many unknowns to be between (budget writing) legislative sessions. It’s the worst year to plan a budget. (And) it appears that we are \$100,000 behind in what we collected (in property taxes) at this time last year.” Letcher County Schools’ Finance Officer Roger Martin laying out some of the problems in producing next year’s draft budget. From the Whitesburg *Mountain Eagle*.

“If you ask 10 people what ought to be included in 10th-grade

math, you’re going to get 10 different answers. I’ve been through the process before. And to do it right, it’s long and tedious. I’d be more comfortable with a longer time frame than next August.” University of Louisville math professor William Bush in agreement with legislative proposals for fewer but stronger math standards in the CATS test but not in agreement with a proposed implementation timetable of Aug. 1, 2009. From the *Lexington Herald-Leader*.

“This is just the beginning of the thinking.” Laurel County Superintendent David Young on the uncertainties of budget building this year. From the London *Sentinel-Echo*.

“My concern is my daughter is upset because every year we’re going to have to touch this: whether she can go to Pikeville Independent year-by-year. My concern is not having the right to say where I want to send my child to school without having them pay some type of repercussion for that.” Parent Jeanette Sexton after the Pike County board agreed to a one-year nonresident agreement with Pikeville Independent Schools, setting a 330-student limit on cross-boundary attendance with accompanying state funding. From the Pikeville *Appalachian News-Express*.

“I don’t think that’s an educated position to take - to say that

“Sure, it hit home. It’s real scary. I’ve coached for 34 years and I thank God that I’ve gotten through 34 years without losing a player on the field. I can’t imagine what a coach goes through.” Bell County High School head football coach Dudley Hilton reacting to the criminal indictment of a Jefferson County football coach following a player’s apparently heat-related death following a fall 2008 practice. From the Louisville *Courier-Journal*.

“This is not about football. This is not about coaches. It’s about a trained adult who was in charge of the health and welfare of a child.” Jefferson Commonwealth’s Attorney Dave Stengel on the precedent setting nature of a criminal indictment against a school coach over a player’s death. From the Louisville *Courier-Journal*.

schooling stops the day the testing is over. That's one of those perception problems you have. I know it's not true, but there are some concerns that the teaching stops when the testing is over. It's hard to sometimes overcome those perceptions." State Rep. Jimmy Higdon (R-Lebanon) responding to a question from Marion County Superintendent Roger Marcum about rumblings in the 2009 General Assembly to eliminate the CATS test. From the *Lebanon Enterprise*.

"It gives us the freedom to work together and utilize each other's strengths."

Summit Elementary third-grade teacher Janice Marcum on the "professional learning communities" strategy used throughout the Boyd County Schools to encourage teachers to collaborate in developing best instructional practices and common standards. From the *Ashland Daily Independent*.



"Those children that are already there shouldn't be affected. I understand the situation for them, but I can't see doing this to the students already enrolled." Harlan County board Chairman Gary Farmer on his board's rejection of a proposed nonresident student contract with Letcher County Schools that would have reduced the exchange to a one-to-one trade without grandfathering in current students. From the *Harlan Daily Enterprise*.

"We've added skinnies (shorter, split block classes year-round) because we felt like there was support and research for having some fundamental classes every day even if it meant being in the classroom for a shorter period of time. (But) the growth we have seen has slowed down and we cannot be satisfied with a plateau or a 'pretty good. We came to

the reality that our academic indicators in the majority of areas have fallen below the state average and we believe strongly that MCHS is better than the state average." Meade County High School Principal Bill Adams on the school council's decision to drop block scheduling next year in favor of a seven-period class day. From the *Brandenburg News-Herald*.

"At some juncture, that elementary school could become a high school." Taylor County Superintendent Gary Seaborne on the district's planned flexibility in building a 500-student, \$11.5 million elementary school that could be expanded at some point into a 900-student, \$19 million high school. From the *Campbellsville Central Kentucky News-Journal*.

"This is just a game for the state. It's a way for them to save money, is it not?" Webster County board member Tim McCormick about how the state's new Infinite Campus student information system has changed the way student attendance – and thus state funding – is calculated. From the *Providence Journal Enterprise*.

"How can a school have an athletic program that is OK for the home-school student but be so bad it cannot be considered for academic reasons? To preclude the academics from our schools but take advantage of the athletics and have a law passed



to force our cash-strapped schools to deal with the desires of a 'few who asked' is not the answer for success in the field, the classroom or on the court." Campbell

County board member Mike Combs on a bill that would require public schools to allow home-schooled students to play on athletic teams. From the *Fort Mitchell Nky.com*. ☚

Using technology to keep the public informed

POINT ...

"Simplistically for me, this fills a gap of communication. As our community grows and access grows, it might grow into a major thing. It's another way to promote what we do. As an expense, is it worth that communication? If you're asking me, I think it is. Our overall goal is to be a top 20 school district. I think top 20 school districts promote themselves. They need the community support." Grant County Superintendent Michael Hibbett on a five-year plan to develop a district-operated cable television channel with on-demand Internet services.

COUNTERPOINT...

"My concern was that we are having trouble even posting stuff on the Web site, how are we ever going to be able to do this? We are so swamped. It's not because people don't want it. I'm just afraid we're going to put all the money out there and then we're not going to have anything for it." Grant County board member Billie Cahill on her concerns about the feasibility of the project that will cost the district nearly \$21,000 in the first year.

From the *Williamstown Grant County News*

Dialogue rules at Oldham 'town hall' sessions

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

If variety is the spice of life, the Oldham County school board got a concoction of chili powder, cinnamon and maybe some sage as it held the second in a series of three town hall meetings in January.

The sessions have been wide-ranging by design, intended to make up for the lack of time during regular school board meetings for anything resembling a dialogue between the board and members of the public.

The back-and-forth of the town hall gatherings has been good, said board member Larry Dodson. "At least they can say, 'You listened to me and gave us a forum to say it in' and that means a lot to people," said Dodson, who also is a member of KSBA's board of directors.

Superintendent Paul Upchurch said the town hall sessions are part of the district's overall communications strategy. "One of the board's goals is to constantly try to improve communications, internally and externally. We have just as many staff members come with issues as the community," he said. "It's going to open up communication, which means overall you're going to improve services for kids."

Though wide-ranging, the sessions have had a structure in that the board's regulations on public comments still apply: the panel gets to set a time limit based on number of attendees and no public criticism of individual employees is allowed.

Within the span of an hour and a half in January, the board and Upchurch:

- Heard thanks and follow-up from a school bus driver representative, who debated the need for a bus driver association with the board team.
- Got some criticism from a citizen about the wording of the district's vision and goals, as stated on its Web site.
- Was asked by a parent for their opinion on proposed revisions to CATS and the state's math curriculum.
- Dealt with a parent's concern about student safety during ongoing construction at a new school, along with pointed questions on the progress of the project.
- Heard a request from a resident of a subdivision next

to the district's new football stadium for expanded fencing to keep trespassers off his property.

Oldham County Deputy Judge-Executive Paula Gish even got into the act by encouraging the board to add local government to the curriculum, in addition to state and federal governments. Gish said she has noticed that students in Leadership Oldham County are surprised to learn about county government responsibilities and don't know how the local school district works.

Bus driver Carl Schneider makes a repeat appearance at Oldham County school board's second town meeting, following up on some bus driver issues.

The open format does carry some vulnerability for school board members, board Chairwoman Joyce Fletcher said. "But I think we need to be willing to do that," she said. "We can't operate in isolation" from the community.

The bus driver delegation had made its initial presentation at the first town hall meeting, but board member Jennifer Jones saw nothing wrong with a repeat appearance.

"It keeps us on our toes," she said. Jones also pointed out that board members are often contacted by the public individually with concerns, but these forums are a way for board members to hear these comments together.

"It's just a nice avenue for it so the board can hear it as a whole," she said.

Dodson said that it's also good for the principals and administrators who attend to hear the public comments at the same time.

"We need to know when we're doing a good job, but we also need to know what to improve," agreed North Oldham High School Principal Lisa Jarrett.

Rhonda Peege, who asked the question about CATS changes, said she also enjoyed listening to the ideas and concerns of other attendees.

"I love the idea that (the board is) willing to listen to the community and respond to questions that we might not otherwise have access to," she said.

Stan Fitch wasn't completely happy with the answer he received to his question about school construction, but said, "I think the town hall process is excellent. I'm pleased with the fact that they open it up."

Upchurch said the district has gotten a couple of ideas from citizens who have attended the meetings. For example, he said, the district had been in the process of developing a parents' special education advisory group and input from parents of special education students at the first town hall forum "confirmed that this was something we really need."

The dialogue the board team has with those who attend serves another purpose besides listening to public concerns, Upchurch said: "It helps us educate our community about what our vision and mission is." ❧



From box of documents to click of the mouse: Expanded report cards go online

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Frankfort is taking something away from local school districts, but in this instance, school leaders will be happy.

Expanded school and district report cards, which had been the bailiwick of local school districts, are now the province of the state Department of Education. The voluminous collection of documents, which includes the Kentucky Performance Report and other data, "was a tremendous amount of work" for schools and districts, said Jay Roberts, database analyst for the state education department.

"We feel like it's better for us to take on the burden and try to do it in a way people can access it than it is to put something else on the districts. If they're spending their time preparing huge boxes of information that no one will ever ask to see, that's pretty discouraging," he said.

With the new regulatory change, schools and districts will still be required to keep the expanded data up to date, but the department "will form the data into databases and make it accessible," on its Web site, and linked to basic school and district report cards, Roberts explained.

There also is a change for those basic report cards, which have been posted on the department's Web site, and also mailed out in hard-copy form annually to parents and guardians. Now the Web version will be the primary source of both the basic and expanded report cards.

The education commissioner's Superintendents Advisory Council signed off on the revisions. Chairman Dale Brown, Warren County Schools' superintendent, said he anticipates no problems with the new setup.

"We feel like it's a real convenient way for many people to access the information and we think with the added awareness and p.r. we can give it, hopefully more people will take advantage of the opportunity," he said.

Roberts said the expanded report cards in school offices were used infrequently. "There are many districts where no one ever asked to see it," he said. In fact, he said, even two of the state's largest districts received just two requests in 11 years.

The advantages

Not having to distribute the hard copies of the regular report cards will save the state education department \$400,000 a year, Roberts said. In anticipation of the change, the latest

cards are not being printed and will be posted online. Years ago, school districts had been required to distribute the hard-copy report cards, but the job was later centralized at the education department.

That centralization points to another advantage with the switch: timeliness. "We were doing well, even with a very good printing company, to get the cards out by early March, and that's not much of a help," Roberts said. "This way we'll be able to get the cards out and up on the Web within just a couple of weeks of the data becoming available."

Another advantage is that unlike the hard copies that are issued once and "frozen," the Web-based data can be updated. "Data comes out two or three times a year and each time it's much improved," Roberts said. "It'll be good to start with but it'll be improved two or three times. This report card will get more accurate as the year goes on."

Getting out the word

There is one new duty school districts will acquire with this change: getting the word out to their communities that this information is available on the department's Web site.

"It's going to be very important we get the word out so more people are aware of this and will take advantage of viewing the school information," Brown said.

Roberts said districts in mid-winter will need to place a notice in the area newspaper with the largest circulation to let the public know that the report cards are on the department's Web site and hard copies may be obtained at schools and district offices.

He said he thinks more people ultimately will view the information in an online format because the basic report card mailings were not foolproof. "There's such a tremendous percentage of our cards returned every year because people move so much. We get hundreds and hundreds of cards back," he said.

Brown and Roberts believe the Web-based system will not pose problems for families without Internet access.

"The Internet has become so ubiquitous with public libraries everywhere, municipal buildings, so we think the vast majority of people will use that method," Roberts said.

If someone can't access the report cards online, a district easily can do what Warren County does, Brown said: "we'll print off a copy and send it to them." ☞

There's no place like home

Some districts rediscover local attractions for cost-saving field trips



Photo provided by the Louisville Science Center

Students respond with slightly awed expressions to information shared by Charmein Weathers, physical science coordinator at the Louisville Science Center. The group was in the center's Discovery Gallery.

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Clark County Schools, like many other districts, has curbed field trips to save money, but in doing so, has made an unexpected discovery: there are home-grown attractions that can achieve the same goals as those 60 or 70 miles away.

Paul Christy, the district's operations manager, said teachers are finding local opportunities for field trips, such as taking arts and humanities classes to the Leeds Center for the Arts theater in Winchester.

"Some of our schools are actually within walking distance to go to those, where they had been going to Lexington," Christy said.

He believes this influx of students also benefits the local cultural institutions. "I think in some ways it encourages those types of things in the community itself now that there's school participation," he said, adding that it also spurs more student interest in drama and the arts.

Elementary school students also are being bused to the district's George Rogers Clark High School, where drama department students regularly stage

musicals and plays that they can observe during the day.

"It's been a tremendous boost to our high school program," Christy said.

In the Science Hill Independent district, where teachers now are limited to one school-sponsored field trip per class during the school year, they're also relying more on local offerings.

"We've also asked them to consider staying in-county – it just makes sense – but we've got a lot of good stuff in our county with the Center for Rural Development and its cultural and arts and humanities events," Superintendent Rick Walker said.

However, not all school districts are situated in places where they can draw on resources close by for enriching field trips. Adair County Superintendent Darrell Treece said that county has a few local attractions, such as the fishery at Wolf Creek Dam, "but most of our things are at best in Somerset or Bowling Green, and Somerset's 40 miles and Bowling Green is 70. If we go to Louisville or Lexington or Frankfort, it's 100 miles, so it will curtail anything like that, definitely."

Continued on the next page

Impact of cutbacks on destinations varies

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

The field trip squeeze as measured by its impact on popular destinations is a mixed bag at this point. The recent shuttering of the Challenger Learning Center in Radcliff is a high-profile example of the impact of lost field trip revenue.

The K-12 traffic at the Kentucky Folk Art Center in Morehead has dropped by more than half compared with the previous year, said executive director Matt Collingsworth. There are programs designed to attract school groups at the center, "but now we're doing totally outreach because schools just don't have the money to get here. We had a few school groups in with an exhibition we had in the fall; I don't expect to have many this spring," Collingsworth said.

What worries him further is that the center, which is affiliated with Morehead State University, also continues to see its own budget cut and may eventually have to curb even the outreach program, which currently is offered at no cost to schools.

In contrast, the Louisville Science Center hasn't seen much impact yet on both the number of school groups it hosts, or on the distance those groups travel to get there, according to communications manager Danielle Waller.

However, the center is cognizant of school district budget cuts in its marketing. "We have tried to emphasize that we do have low-price field trip options to keep them looking at our cards rather than just throwing them aside. We're emphasizing that our field trips start as low as \$5 per student," Waller said. ☞

Treece said each school in his district is allocated funds at the beginning of the school year for field trips and athletic travel, with the principal and school council deciding how to spend it. Students may have taken fewer field trips in the fall due to tight funding, he said, “but with the budget the way it is right now, I expect a significant decrease this spring.”

Whether limitations are set will depend on the severity of the situation at that time, Treece said.

Science Hill has not banned trips further afield, as long as those trips have a private sponsor or are funded by a grant, Walker said. The PTA has helped by giving each teacher \$100 apiece, which they can use for field trips, and parents are being asked to contribute toward the cost of some trips. For example, Walker said, the district might ask parents to pay for their child’s ticket to a play while the district pays for the transportation.

Setting standards

In Clark County, Christy is the gatekeeper who ensures that field trips are approved based on cost and relevance to the curriculum.

“The things we’ve cut out have been a lot of things they used to do, like taking them all to a pumpkin patch, those kinds of things. They live in Winchester and drive up to Scott County to see a pumpkin patch when they pass three right here in the county,” he said.

Patricia Rosenthal, instructional supervisor for Clark County Schools, said the district also ensures the quality of field trips by relying on statewide activities, such as those organized around Lincoln’s bicentennial birthday this year: “Things that we know have been put together and are well-developed, where lesson plans and follow-up activities are provided.”

So far, though the price of fuel has dropped, there has been no corresponding increase in field trips, Christy said.

“The biggest part has been educating our administrators and teachers to ensure the trips are relevant to the classroom and that there’s no other option that’s readily available locally to do to enhance that classroom activity rather than putting them on a bus to taking them 60 or 70 miles away to do

something,” he said.

As yet, Christy said he has not had to deny any requests. “Teachers have done an excellent job of looking at just the trips that would aid them in their classroom instruction and add to their classroom instruction,” he said.

“It remains to be seen,” Christy said, how this will affect the “reward” trips toward the end of the school year.

Treece and others worry about the budget-driven slicing of enrichment activities like field trips.

“My first priority is the teacher in the classroom because that’s where the rubber meets the road,” he said. “But all these other things with the field trips, academic and athletics too, those are a vital part of students’ education above and beyond the academics and sort of the icing on the cake that they deserve for hard work in the academics. I really hate to see that loss.”

There is a lot to be said for the experience students gain through field trips, Clark County’s Rosenthal said.

“I do think it makes a difference to kids if they don’t see real-life things,” she said. “I do think it does help.” ☞

Web site of the month

Being in school isn’t all serious business, a point not lost on the Web site of **Lost Creek Elementary School** in Perry County.

The site manages to be fun and whimsical, with a nod to the age of its students, while still being informative.

Links to some pages look like buttons and erasers, including the student spotlight, the PTA page and links to newsletters.

The site also offers the latest in social networking trends, a link for alumni to a Facebook group where graduates can easily find and keep up with each other.

The site menu stays consistent from page to page, making navigation easy.

To visit the site, go to www.perry.k12.ky.us and click on “Lost Creek Elementary” toward the bottom of the page. ☞



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(N)ice conference

Weather doesn't stop annual KSBA gathering

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Boyd County school board member Phillip Pruitt didn't let a little thing like a concussion stop him from attending this year's KSBA annual conference, much less an ice and snow storm – though the two are directly related.

Pruitt was working at his job in Ashland just prior to the Jan. 30-Feb. 1 conference when he slipped on ice and fell hard. His doctor diagnosed him with a concussion and advised him to go home and rest.

"I said, 'I can't. I've got to go to Louisville,'" said Pruitt. Though the delay created by the doctor's visit caused him to miss a ride with other members of his board team – who, by the way, plowed through nine inches of snow in the Ashland area as they left – Pruitt and his wife weren't far behind.

"I wouldn't miss it. I love this conference," he said.

At the other end of the state, Warren County school board member Don Basham and his fellow board members got word that the main roads were clear from Superintendent Dale Brown, who had made the trip to Louisville early for another meeting.

Basham's conference attendance wasn't without mishap, however, as he slipped on black ice in the Galt House parking lot. Fortunately, he wasn't injured – unlike opening speaker humorist Carl Hurley, who gamely took the stage despite a sore leg from a fall.

Overall conference attendance was down, but given the severity of the ice storm, which left upwards of 700,000 people statewide without electric service at one point, conference organizer Kerri Schelling was gratified to see that almost 700 people made it to Louisville. Just two clinic presenters were

forced to cancel as well as several clinic facilitators, but attendees took it in stride, she said.

"People really rolled with the punches," said Schelling, KSBA's director of board team development. "The spirit and enthusiasm of the folks was amazingly high."

The prospect of warmth and electricity when their own homes had none also didn't hurt. "I got to wash my hair and use a dryer," said new Daviess County school board member Dianne Mackey, who fell into that group.

Without cell phone or land line service, Mackey initially had a hard time finding out if the conference was still on. She finally located a friend with a generator who was able to call the Galt House to check, since KSBA's own phones and e-mail were also out until the day before the event.

Making the call

Schelling said the decision to move forward with the conference was not made lightly or unilaterally.

"Physical safety was the first thing we looked at," she said. "A main consideration was talking to the state Division of Emergency Management to make sure the forecast was improving and the road conditions were drivable. We didn't want to bring people here and then have another wave of bad weather hit."

The state emergency officials assured Executive Director Bill Scott that the forecast was good and major interstates and main roads were clear.

Once that was determined, KSBA leaders looked at what would be best for members: going forward with the conference or rescheduling. "Many members said they were coming if we had it, and we wanted to give people the opportunity to get their training hours and participate in the terrific clinics we had lined up. They'd taken off work, they had reservations,"

See "Ice" continued on Page 14

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Keynote speaker Eric Chester speaks about reaching the students of Generation Y.

Conference keynote: The digital natives are restless

Governor also rallies board members

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

In a conference that is all about connections, the keynote speaker was all about disconnect as he raised the awareness of school board members about the gaps between schools, this generation of students and the needs of their eventual employers.

Eric Chester painted a vivid picture of Generation Y – the digital generation of students we are now educating and young teachers schools are hiring. The biggest influences on this group are far different from those of the preceding generations, he said, which creates a disconnect between them and those who try to teach them and employ them.

“We’re looking at a cohort who has grown up in a world that is radically different from you and I,” said Chester, a Colorado resident and former teacher who has written a book on the subject. That means reaching this cohort requires a different type of education and different strategies in the classroom, he said.

“Facts, figures, names, dates – having the knowledge is not that important to them,” he said. “Knowing where to get it is what’s important to them.”

In fact, research has proven that their brains work differently than their predecessors, he said, using the comparison of a reel-to-reel tape recorder with an iPod. “Minds that work differently require a different type of education.”

Generation Y is impatient, unafraid of

technology and welcomes change, Chester said.

“When things don’t change fast enough, this generation has a word for that: it’s boring. When surveyed, Generation Y will chose physical injury over boredom. They would rather be tortured than bored,” he said.

Generation Y also has what he called “a free agent mentality,” and has no illusions about long-term job security: If work is not meaningful or they are bored in school, they disengage.

They expect the spotlight, since their lives probably have been documented on videotape since birth, Chester said. This means they want to be recognized and rewarded for doing well, he said. The old maxim of children being seen and not heard does not apply to this generation: “They crave attention and they are blunt and expressive.”

They also are skeptics, he said, and because of that it’s important that they know people who won’t lie to them. “They don’t just automatically buy the information we share with them We need to share hope and promise but not just made up on conjecture.”

Generation Y also is Generation Why – if they understand the “why” of what’s being taught, they are more responsive, Chester said.

Finally, he said, this cohort gets involved: “They have the time and the tools and the talent to create a better world and they are committed to doing so; we need to leverage that.”

Governor asks for help

While Chester rallied school board members and administrators on the subject of



See “Main speakers” continued on Page 23



Kenton County school board President Karen Collins (center) is all smiles after receiving the 2009 Proudfoot Award for Outstanding School Board Member.

Advocate Staff Report

When it comes to Kenton County Schools, school board President Karen Collins is a hands-on advocate for students and for better education. She is a weekly volunteer reading coach, a member of the PTA, and helped the district dramatically restructure its high school curriculum to prepare students for the future.

She even rolled up her sleeves and worked with teachers and administrators to improve instruction and led an aggressive facilities plan to build two highly energy-efficient buildings, among many other contributions.

For her performance, Collins has earned the 2009 Proudfoot Award for Outstanding School Board Member.

The honor was presented last month during KSBA's annual conference. The award, judged by the Kentucky PTA, is named after late Rowan County school board member Dr. Warren H. Proudfoot. It recognizes a current school board member for distinguished leadership and community service.

Collins, a 12-year member of the Kenton school board, was praised for her collaborative working style. Bev Johnson, president of the Kenton County Education Association, wrote in her nomination of Collins that she appreciates her "coop-

Kenton's Collins named Proudfoot winner

erative nature and the family atmosphere inspired through her leadership, in spite of the large size of our school district."

Those characteristics were evident as Collins accepted the award, spreading the praise to the district's present and past superintendents, and administrators and board members. Thanks to their leadership and vision, "we are well on our way to proficiency by 2014," she said.

As for her fellow board members, "We bring five different perspectives to the table, but we have one agenda: that's educating children."

Johnson also cited Collins' willingness to help create a new teaching rubric to improve instruction, even though she is not an educator.

"She came to the meetings periodically to listen in on the discussion of the teachers and administrators as they hammered out this resource, which will be instrumental in improving instruction and learning in our school district," Johnson wrote. "Karen has attended professional development sessions to become trained in the same initiatives as the teachers to utilize what are best practices for their classrooms."

Former Superintendent Susan Cook lauded the difficult decisions Collins has made, even when they may have been unpopular in their high-growth district.

"She boldly voted for the Nickel Growth tax which provided the necessary funds for over \$154 million in renovations and new construction in our school district," she said.

Some of that new construction led to the district's two energy-efficient buildings, which have won state and national awards for their energy-instructional programs. They also saved the district \$260,000 in energy costs last year alone.

One of the biggest changes during Collins' tenure is the restructuring of the district's three high schools into a career-based curriculum called the Schools of Study, which are smaller learning communities geared toward preparing students for the 21st century workforce.

"Mrs. Collins is a strong advocate of high expectations of students and staff," Cook wrote. "She supports the mission of our schools as preparing all students to successfully compete in the global economy." ❧

Ice

Continued from Page 12

Schelling explained. "It just made sense to go ahead and have it."

Even so, KSBA staff periodically checked with the Galt House to make sure it still had electric service.

After the final call was made on Thursday, KSBA staffers manned the now-working phones in Frankfort and called each district to get the word out, as well as posting notice on the association's Web site.

"I sensed in some of the people I talked to that there was a real desire to have the conference. They like to get their hours, they enjoy the camaraderie, the opportunity to network. I think it's more than just a conference – it's *their* conference and they have a lot of ownership in it," Schelling said.

KSBA's annual conference has traditionally been held in January or February. Prior to the growing success of the Winter Symposium in December, it had historically been the first opportunity for new board members to get training, Schelling said. Other factors preclude the event from being held at other times of the year, such as spring break schedules, testing periods, summer vacations and other education conferences. A less-serious ice storm hit on the eve of last year's conference, but longtime KSBA staffers could recall only one other weather disruption, early in the association's history.

The January-February meeting "is a good window for everything except the weather," Schelling said. ❧

Mason County's Moore named Superintendent of the Year

Advocate Staff Report

In the Mason County school district, it is said that no significant learning can occur without a significant relationship. With that belief in mind, every student receives a home visit from the district before the school year even begins.

The "Connections" program, along with student focus groups and certified and classified advisory committees, are the cornerstones of Superintendent Tim Moore's emphasis on communication that have helped increase student achievement, improve the district's financial standing and create partnerships with the community.

These are just a few of the reasons Moore was selected as the 2009 Dupree Outstanding Superintendent Award winner. The award, announced during KSBA's conference last month, is presented by the family of the late F.L. Dupree Sr., a Lexington businessman and a lifelong supporter of Kentucky's public schools. It recognizes exceptional leadership in educational programs, finance, and student, staff and community relations. Honorees are chosen by a panel of past recipients.

In accepting the award, Moore sounded the themes of relationships and customer service. "Our goal for our kids is for every kid to graduate from Mason County Schools with at least five people they can count on who made a significant difference" in their lives, he said.

But Moore also took those themes to another level, telling conference attendees that Kentucky's schools and districts are doing the best job they've ever done at collaborating and sharing what works.

"It's not just about Kenton County Schools or Mason County Schools getting to proficiency," he said. "It's about how we can help each other get there."

Moore took over the reins in Mason County in 1997 and a year later had to lead



Mason County Superintendent Tim Moore, right, is congratulated after receiving the Dupree Award for outstanding superintendent during KSBA's annual conference.

the district back from a \$500,000 court judgment that left it with a negative general fund balance. In her nomination of Moore, school board Vice Chairwoman Ann Porter wrote that he asked district personnel to create opportunities from obstacles. The plan was effective and by 2008, the general fund balance was just over \$4 million.

"This has been achieved as school and program personnel justify spending based on needs assessment, priorities of schools relating to student achievement while simultaneously upgrading technology and school facilities ..." Porter wrote.

Porter cited Moore's changes in hiring practices as one of the reasons the district's academic index has seen steady growth and has met all No Child Left Behind goals.

Moore has also fostered better relationships with students, faculty and staff, asking for their input to identify areas of concern and for ways to solve problems.

"In monthly meetings with school representatives from every job classification, updates are shared, ideas solicited, and problems with possible solutions are developed," Porter wrote. "These individuals become ambassadors in their respective schools about concerns, initiatives, and changes impacting professional lives."

Porter said Moore considers every Mason County employee a public relations agent for the district. "Customer service has been a major focus of the district with all staff members being trained ... in creating welcoming schools," she wrote. "The district is constantly seeking opportunities to invite the public into the schools and to share a message about students, staff and their efforts."

As a result, volunteer hours have increased dramatically, with 52,000 hours documented in 2007. ☘

"Our goal for our kids is for every kid to graduate from Mason County Schools with at least five people they can count on who made a significant difference" in their lives.

— Tim Moore,
Mason County Schools
superintendent

Muhlenberg detective, Horse Cave company 2009's Friends of Education

Advocate Staff Report

A company dedicated to helping a school district close the achievement gap and a law enforcement officer determined to keep kids in school are recipients of the 2009 Kentucky School Boards Association's Friend of Education Award.

Dart Container Corp. of Horse Cave and Detective Mike Drake of Powderly were announced as the winners during KSBA's annual conference in Louisville. The award is presented annually to a corporation or organization and to an individual in recognition of outstanding contributions to public schools.

Mike Drake

Drake, a retired Kentucky State Police detective who now works as a detective with the Pennyriple Narcotics Task Force, has devoted most of his work time and much of his free time over the past four years to providing law enforcement services to the Muhlenberg County school district.

"Detective Drake stands out from other dedicated school resource officers due to his excellent student counseling skills and obvious passion for student success," school board member Scott Bivins said in nominating Drake.

In addition, Drake works diligently to locate at-risk or truant students, and also works with the parents of those pupils.

"I have personally observed him encourage youth, one-on-one, to continue and complete his/her education," Bivins said. Drake also has been instrumental in introducing technology and training not only to local law enforcement agencies, but to teachers and administrators.

Dart Container Corp.

Dart Container Corp. reached out to contact Caverna Independent Schools to offer its help in getting students to proficiency, without being asked by the district.

"They are clear in the understanding that an investment in our schools will also help them in years to come," said Superintendent Dr. Sam Dick. He and board Chairman Wayne Hatcher said the company's support has helped the system's educational program to expand and remain strong.

In accepting the award for Dart, company Human Resource Manager Bev McMannimie said one of the best days of her life was when she visited a Caverna school and watched the children benefit from the gift of a \$5 coupon for a book.

"These kids are our future," she told

conference-goers. "I know that they're going to go on to bigger and better things some time, somewhere, but someday we may be able to have them working at our facility, at Dart. And that's our goal, to help them, each and every one of them."

Over the past two years alone, Dart has given a total of \$20,500 to the district's high-, middle- and elementary schools. The funds have been used to buy art supplies, family and consumer science supplies and equipment, calculators, workbooks, dictionaries and library books targeted to specific groups.

The district has made academic gains on state testing during this period, Dick and Hatcher wrote in their nomination, and Dart contributed to that. ☞



(Top photo) KSBA President Ed Massey, far right, presents the Friend of Education Award to officials from the Dart Container Corp.

(Right) Friend of Education winner Mike Drake, center, accepts congratulations from Ed-die Moore, West Point Independent's school board vice chairman.

Changing of the guard

Advocate Staff Report

KSBA installed its new president and president elect, along with four new directors-at-large during the association's annual business meeting, held in conjunction with its annual conference.

Whitley County board Chairman Delmar Mahan will serve a two-year term as KSBA president, while outgoing chief Ed Massey becomes the immediate past president. Mahan, a Corbin accountant, has 18 years of service as a school board member. His service to KSBA includes six years on the association's board – including two as president elect – and eight years on the board of the Kentucky School Boards Insurance Trust.

Succeeding him as president elect is Lincoln County school board Vice Chairman Tom Blankenship, a former teacher, principal and district administrator who has served six years on KSBA's board of directors. His local board service totals more than 30 years over two stints.

The four directors-at-large include:

- Jefferson County school board member Linda Duncan,



Blankenship



White



Peel



Duncan



England

who was re-elected for a second term. Duncan, a retired teacher and assistant principal, has been on the Jefferson County board since 2006.

- Tim England, a 16-year member of the Barren County Board of Education and its current vice chairman. A pharmacist, England served two years as Third Region regional chairperson on the KSBA board.

- Pulaski County board vice chairman William White, who previously served as regional chairperson on KSBA's board. White, a retired teacher and principal, and been a local school board member for six years.

- Eugene Peel, a member of the Jessamine County Board of Education since 1985, who was re-elected to a second term on the KSBA board. He is retired from IBM/Lexmark. ☞

KIDS First award winners



A school board member who is an ambassador for public education and a superintendent who has made early childhood literacy both his and his district's mission were among those honored with the 2009 KIDS First Advocacy Awards from the Kentucky School Boards Association.

Gallatin County Board of Education member Becky Burgett (above left) and Madison County Schools Superintendent Tommy Floyd (above right), pictured with KSBA President Ed Massey, left, and incoming President Delmar Mahan, were recognized at KSBA's 73rd annual conference.

State Rep. Tommy Thompson (D-Owensboro) and State Sen. Ken Winters (R-Murray) also received the award, though the icy weather kept them from attending the conference.

The KIDS First awards were created by KSBA's Board of Directors to honor local and state leaders who work on behalf of Kentucky's public schools and students. Each year, a state senator, state representative, school board member and superintendent are recognized. ☞

More talk can result in safer schools

By Jennifer Wohlleb
Staff Writer

The presenters at the inaugural Joe England Safe Schools Symposium come from different backgrounds and have very different life experiences, but all shared a similar message: when it comes to school safety there is no such thing as talking too much.

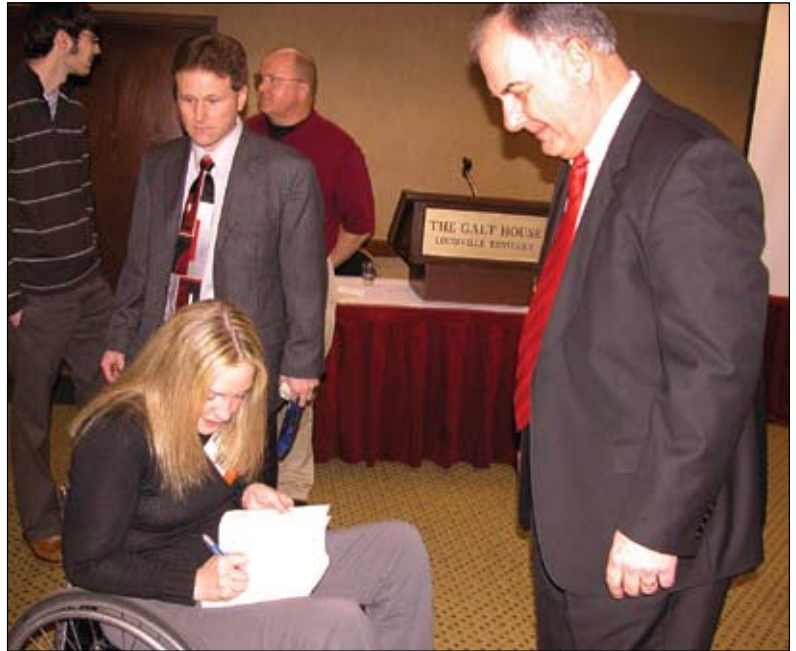
Missy Jenkins Smith, a survivor of the 1997 Heath High School shooting, shared her story with the capacity crowd of more than 200 people who attended the symposium during KSBA's 73rd annual conference. Georgeann Rooney DiCaprio, formerly with the U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center and Bill Modzeleski with the U.S. Department of Education's Office and Safe and Drug Free Schools, shared the results of their agencies' joint Bystander Study, a follow-up to the earlier study examining school shooters.

The new study showed that in the case of the Heath shooting and most of the other school shootings examined, a number of people had heard the shooters planning their attacks in tones ranging from casual and almost joking to serious detailed plots. The goal of the study is to try to get more people to share that information, as well as provide warning signs that could help those who work with students put the pieces together to prevent future attacks.

"We found that school attacks were rarely sudden or impulsive," DiCaprio said. "There's a pathway that occurs before someone decides to carry out an attack. A lot of times, if you know what to look for, you can ask the questions of that person to see if they appear to be on a pathway to attack."

The Bystander Study looked at 37 incidents with 41 attackers from 1974 through 2000.

Modzeleski said identifying the warning signs is



Missy Jenkins Smith, a survivor of the 1997 Heath High School shooting, signs a copy of her book for Jon Akers, director of the Kentucky Center for School Safety.

important because the attackers rarely make formal threats against their targets.

"This is important because very often in law enforcement, education, mental health, we wait until someone makes a threat before we act," he said. "What this implies is that we can't wait until someone makes a formal threat. We found that while these kids may not send a formal threat, they do send signals."

DiCaprio said in 93 percent of the cases they studied, someone was concerned about the attacker before the incident because of bizarre behavior or writings, but wasn't able to put the pieces together in time to prevent their actions.

"That's why being proactive and forming threat assessment teams that have the ability to gather information is so important," she said. "Maybe there are multiple people concerned about one student but they're not connecting the pieces of the puzzle."

Connecting some of those pieces in the Heath High School case may have prevented Michael Car-



Joe England School Safety Symposium

This session was named in remembrance of the late Harrison County board member, a retired law enforcement professional and a member of the boards of KSBA and Kentucky Center for School Safety.

As an educational leader and a law enforcement professional, he was acutely aware of the relationship between school safety, student discipline and student achievement. By focusing on this connection, this symposium is our way of honoring the memory of a true public servant.

KSBA's 73rd annual conference

neal from killing three of his fellow students and injuring five, including Smith, a 15-year-old sophomore at the time, who is now paralyzed from the waist down. Carneal had warned others that "something big" was going to happen that day at school. He had also pulled a gun on two students at school prior to the shooting, but instead of reporting it, the students just laughed at him.

But Smith doesn't dwell on those missed opportunities to stop Carneal; rather, she looks at the opportunities she has created from tragedy.

Smith, now a counselor in a day treatment program for troubled kids in Calloway County, recently gave birth to her first child and has just released a book she co-wrote entitled, *I Choose to Be Happy*.

During her presentation, she even spoke with some empathy for Carneal, who apparently was bullied and felt victimized before choosing to retaliate with violence.

"I couldn't imagine having to deal with that (bullying) every day of my life," she said. "The two times I remember being bullied, I didn't like it all. It was very upsetting and luckily I didn't have to go through that every day of my life."

Smith chose to forgive Carneal, a decision that has had a tremendous impact on her life.

"I knew that being angry and upset was not going to make me walk again," she said. "It wasn't going to change anything that happened that morning and it wasn't going to bring anybody back who died that morning, so I chose to forgive him for me."

Smith said since that moment, she's been happy. "I've done everything that I could to live my life and be the person that I am today."

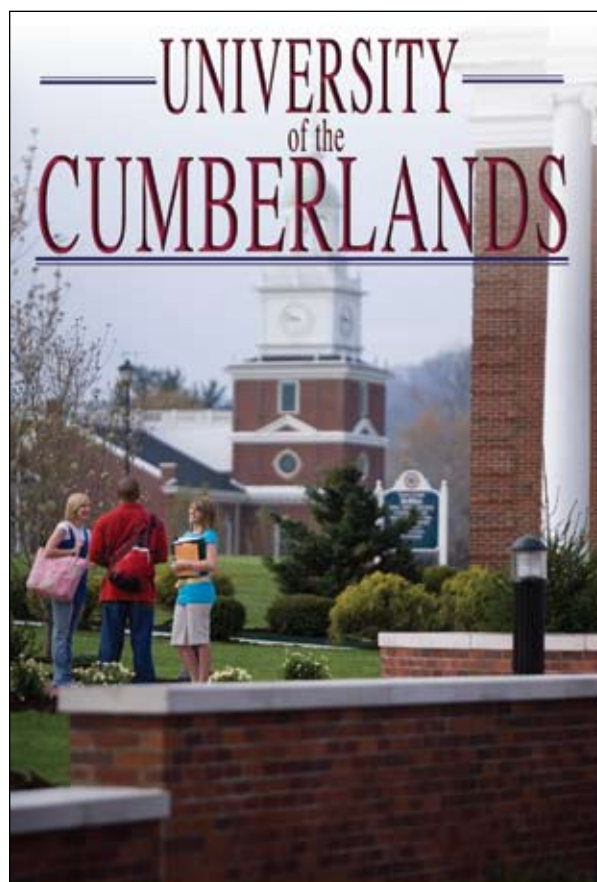
One of the things she does in her work with kids is encourage them to speak up when they hear someone making threats or acting in a way that causes concern. She says that message still needs to be driven home because even though she is in front of students as a living example of what happens when people don't speak up, there is still a reluctance to be a "snitch."

"I ask questions every once in awhile when we get on the topic of violence and a lot of them are scared to say anything," she said. "A lot of them said things like, 'I probably wouldn't say anything because if I did I would be a snitch and they'd probably go after me, if they're not already after someone else,' which I thought was just ridiculous. I'm thinking, 'All right, I'm a huge example of what violence can do ... I can't believe you would worry about being a snitch.'"

Smith plans to continue speaking to students to get the message out.

"I want them to learn from the mistakes we made at my school and prevent it from happening at their school as well," she said. ☼

— For more information about the Secret Service Bystander and Safe School Initiative studies, go to www.ustreas.gov/uss/ntac.shtml.



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Recession boosts interest in students' fiscal fitness

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

It's a sign of concern over the national recession, acknowledged Jan Mester, president of the Kentucky Council on Economic Education: her KSBA clinic on incorporating economics and personal finance into the curriculum was packed.

"It's definitely a teachable moment," she said. "It's an epidemic what kids don't know. We can't afford for the next generation to be uninformed. And it's something so fixable."

LaRue County school board member Norbert Skees, an attendee who shares Mester's concerns, said he was really excited about this clinic offering. "This might be the most important thing (students) learn," he said.

With a background in accounting and business, Skees said he has seen how a lack of knowledge about personal finance affects students once they leave school: they don't know how to balance a checkbook, understand deductions from their paycheck, or penetrate the mysteries of loans and credit scores.

"I think it's almost to the point it should be a required part of the curriculum," Skees said. "I think it's that important."

He is singing Mester's song. The economics education group provides help and resources to teachers and seeks to integrate economics and personal finance into existing subjects, such as math or social studies. The council now is working with the state education department on a new course that incorporates personal finance into a math elective. They are seeking districts



School board members at a clinic session on economic education arrange a sentence defining economics: "The study of how we choose to use limited resources to satisfy unlimited wants and needs."

to pilot the class in fall 2009.

Economics also is a way of teaching kids to make smart choices in life, Mester told the clinic crowd.

"We would like to be able to say in Kentucky that our kids are financially fit for life," she said.

The elements of financial fitness as the economics council sees it include getting a good overall education, learning to work hard and smart – there are no shortcuts – having money management skills and understanding the benefits of saving money.

Mester said she knows school boards don't dabble closely in curriculum, but said they can have a role in raising awareness of economics education. Boards can

ask questions about whether these subjects are being taught, advocate for them and publicly acknowledge and praise the efforts that exist.

They also can help connect schools with community groups and businesses that will work with students on financial literacy. "Solicit people in the community who care about financial fitness for young people," she said.

Mester said the subjects don't have to be "add ons" to further burden teachers. Economics can be folded into a social studies class, for example, while personal finance "can come in through the math door." The council also sponsors special-topic workshops for schools, such as an economics challenge game, stock market games and credit abuse resistance education.

"I think we can get more high schools interested in this," she said. ☘

Fort Thomas board member says tweak SEEK

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Fort Thomas Independent board member Scott Johnson brought his quest to revise Kentucky's basic school funding formula to KSBA's annual conference.

In a clinic presentation, Johnson outlined his research, gleaned from crunching data from the state education department and legislature's Office of Education Accountability.

His conclusion?

"I would say it's time for a tuneup," he said.

Johnson, a two-year member of the northern Kentucky board, said he doesn't advocate scrapping the SEEK

(Support Education Excellence in Kentucky) formula, but simply revisiting it. "SEEK is a work in progress – it was intended to be a work in progress," he said.

In determining whether the formula is still doing its now nearly 20-year-old job of providing equity in funding to all school districts, Johnson came up with a list of 21 districts he contends are most adversely affected by SEEK. While that comprises 12 percent of school districts, those districts represent 36 percent of the state's students, he pointed out.

Among his criticisms of the current formula, he said it does not address the problem of facilities funding for "extreme growth" districts. And Johnson said there also is a problem in the way SEEK interacts with House Bill 44, a

1970s-era law that set a cap on property taxation, limiting revenue growth to 4 percent a year.

Basically, he said, the effect is to shift the burden for funding public schools to the local level, even though districts are hamstrung by the provisions of HB 44.

Johnson has calculated that SEEK has gone from supporting an average of 65 percent of district budgets to 50 percent – with it dipping as low as 28 percent in at least one district. The overall gap between the best- and worst-funded districts has now doubled, he said.

"That is what is wrong with SEEK right now," Johnson said. "It violates its own rules about shifting the burden, about the state funding the primary share." ☘

Preschool center *and* day care center

By Mary Branham

Darryl Lynch saw just one way to improve the Christian County school system—offer preschool services to more children.

“How do you start to build the house from the top down?” Lynch, vice chairman of the Christian County Board of Education, asked. “You cannot build a house on a weak foundation. What we’re talking about (preschool) is the foundation.”

But with money tight and lack of space in buildings, Patty Grable, the district’s director of special education and preschool, had to come up with a creative way to strengthen that foundation.

Grable did what many preschool directors across the country are doing, and what the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence recommends in its Strong Start program: She looked to the community for collaboration. Grable called local day care centers to gauge interest in participating in school-provided preschool services based at those centers.

Teachers from Christian County Schools are going into three day care centers this year, providing instruction for 100 more students than could be offered in nine of the district’s elementary schools. To qualify, centers had to have at least 10 children interested in preschool classes. If more than 10 children are in a class, day care



Darryl Lynch, vice chairman of the Christian County Board of Education, and the district’s preschool director, Patty Grable, discussed the need for collaboration with the community in developing quality preschool services. Lynch called preschool the foundation for student success.

center staff assist in meeting the teacher-student ratio. Providing preschool classes in day care centers also saves transportation costs for the district. And it has opened up spots in the district’s own school-based preschool classes.

In addition, certified teachers from the school district model good teaching strategies for day care center staff, Grable said. She hopes to be able to expand into more centers in the future.

That addresses the same needs Calloway County found when it established a blended program for preschool with the federal Head Start program. Calloway County houses all its preschool classes in one building, as explained in a story in the February issue of the *Kentucky School Advocate*.

Though the models are different, both western Kentucky school districts relied on collaboration to increase the number of preschool students they serve.

Collaboration within the community will make school districts more successful in expanding preschool programs, according to Nancy Lovett of the Early Childhood Regional Training Center based in Calloway County. But, she said, school districts should be creative in the way they collaborate.

“If we’re really going to make economic development in Kentucky or progress for our future, we’re going to have to work together,” Lovett said.

Preschool services have historically been offered in a disjointed manner. Public and private preschool services co-existed, then moved into a model where they cooperate. Lovett said a model of collaboration will be beneficial to all involved.

“With the economic situation we have, it’s critical we use our investments wisely,” Lovett said.

Collaboration, she said, can address the cost concerns while expanding preschool services. But Cindy Heine, associate executive director of the Prichard Committee, said school districts should find what model of collaboration works best for them.

“One thing we would want is incredible flexibility,” she said. “We would not propose a cookie cutter plan.” ❧

— Mary Branham is a contributing writer from Frankfort

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Meade County board team Cs the way to teamwork

By Mary Branham

Meade County Superintendent Mitch Crump is happy with Cs across the Board.

In fact, he thinks those five Cs—character, commitment, communication, connections and (addressing) challenges—are why the school system has been so successful. Members of the Meade County Board of Education would agree. Meade County is only the second district in Kentucky—behind Oldham County—to get three nickel levies approved, according to Crump.

He and board members shared secrets to their success in a clinic session at KSBA's annual conference.

Chairman Dr. John Inman said because board members see each other only once or twice a month, it's important for them to build a good relationship and understand each other's character.

Inman embodies the commitment to students in Meade County—he's been on the board for 36 years. And Crump, who is in his eighth year as superintendent, is only the fourth superintendent in 80 years; there have been only six superintendents since 1910.

Communication—both in the school system and with the community—is key to success, Inman and Crump said. Inman said the board has all pertinent information before meetings. "The No.1 rule of a good board is good communication," Inman said. "Ninety percent of the problems could be resolved with good communication."

Crump and board members strive to make connections in the schools through visits to the schools and visibility in the community.

Crump said he eats lunch at a school 95 percent of the time, and tries to be in each school at least once a week. And he strives to make sure the community is aware of what is going on in the schools. "We try to showcase our schools anytime we can. We set the tax rate," he said. "We want to make sure the community feels confident about what we're doing."

Meade County Schools, like many districts across the state, is facing challenges both academic and



Meade County Board of Education member Belinda Cross, reminds Superintendent Mitchell Crump, left, of one of the top 10 detractors in the board/superintendent relationship — from a board member's point of view. The district's "Top 10 Detractors," offered in the same vein as David Letterman's Top 10 List, were presented in a tongue-in-cheek way to emphasize the importance of good relations among school officials.

economic. In addition, because of the district's proximity to Fort Knox, Meade County faces the possible influx of 400 to 600 students, with little notice, because of base realignment and closure.

But even with those five Cs, Crump and board members said it's important for all involved to know their roles and to understand what is expected of them. In the mode of David Letterman, Crump and board member Belinda Cross shared their top 10 relationship detractors from both sides. Among them:

- Board members don't want huge packets at the last minute; the superintendent doesn't like board members coming to meetings unprepared.
- Board members don't want to be kept in the dark for the superintendent to feel superior; the superintendent doesn't think board members should be "specialists," just focused on one issue.
- Board members don't like agenda items reporting the firing of an employee because it creates the incorrect impression they have employment powers; the superintendent doesn't like spending time on issues unrelated to students.

Kim Millay, who joined the board in January, summed it up this way: "It takes a whole community working together to be able to support our children."

— Mary Branham is a contributing writer from Frankfort

Corbin demonstrates value of in-house PD

By Jennifer Wohlleb
Staff Writer

No school would use a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching children. Corbin Independent Schools won't use that approach for professional development, either.

"Professional development needs differentiation, just like we do with our students," said David Cox, director of academic programs.

Corbin leaders shared the framework for the district's successful PD program during a clinic session at KSBA's conference.

Cox said professional development used to be one-size-fits all because it made sense monetarily and was convenient.

"It wasn't real results-oriented and we didn't follow up to see if it made a difference," he said. "If every one showed up and filled out an evaluation form, we felt like we had a good day."

Assistant Superintendent Brenda Hammons said when she was a teacher she remembers thinking, "How many days do we have to go to this year?" She said the goal now is for teachers to ask, "How many days can I get?" and she said that's usually the question they ask. Corbin Independent requires teachers to complete at least five days of professional development, one day more than the state mandates.

She said a good way for districts to evaluate their professional development program is to begin by asking these five questions:

1. Do you believe the staff in your district view professional

development as more of an opportunity or an obligation?

2. Do you believe as a board member that PD is linked directly to student achievement?

3. Do you think teachers can improve their skills through professional development?

4. Do you feel that PD is adequately funded in your district?

5. Do you feel like you're getting your money's worth from your PD dollars?

Once districts begin to answer these questions, they can start tailoring their professional development to their own needs, she said.

Hammons said one of the biggest changes Corbin made is to use home-grown talent.

"A few years ago we realized that we were sending people to these big, brand-named PD conferences," she said. "They're expensive; registration is high, there's travel and your meals, and it's very hard for teachers to come back and replicate that excitement and the content."

As a result, Corbin Independent began holding its own learning academies two years ago, with 25 during the first summer, many based on needs assessments from teachers.

"We are starting to recognize in our district that we have teachers who are as good as anybody in the state," she said. "I'm sure you do in your districts as well. So we're utilizing those resources. And it's been great for those teachers; it's really making them grow."

Hammons and Cox encouraged board members to ask questions about professional development in their own districts. ☘

Main speakers

Continued from Page 13

Generation Y, Gov. Steve Beshear rallied them to the cause of his budget plan. Beshear, who spoke during the opening session, said, "We're truly in hostile territory you might say."

Shortly after he took office in 2008, the state was hit with a \$432 million revenue shortfall that eventually was addressed – but it's gotten worse since then as the national recession hit.

"It's a double whammy because at the same time demand for government services is greatly increasing because of our economy, the resources we have to address and provide those services have been shrinking," Beshear said.

The governor is now proposing a plan to address a new \$456 million shortfall. It's a plan that protects basic classroom funding and cuts other aspects of K-12 education by 2 percent, compared with 4 percent or more for the rest of state government.

But it also is predicated on an increase in the cigarette and tobacco products tax, a move that drew ap-



Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear, left, speaks with Michael Dammert, chairman of the Beechwood Independent school board, prior to addressing the opening session at KSBA's conference last month.

plause from conference attendees. Beshear asked school board members and others to rally to the plan and talk to their legislators. "I need for you to communicate the situations you find yourselves in and communicate the options and effects of different scenarios that may happen here," he said.

Beshear praised the cooperative spirit of legislative leadership, saying he is hopeful he and lawmakers can find common ground.

The governor said his aim is to not only balance the budget but to continue making strategic investments in education, public protection and health care, "so that when we come out of this economic crisis, I want us positioned ... to be able to grab the opportunity when it's again presented to us, to be able to move ahead and be out in front and on the cutting edge of the opportunity to make our state what it really needs to be." ☘

Leadership Academy step in right direction

Boyle County Schools leaders nurture, encourage talent from within

By Jennifer Wohlleb
Staff report

When it came to improving their schools, Boyle County leaders started with the biggest factors they knew could affect student achievement: culture and climate.

But they also realized that improvement meant a different approach to leadership, which led them to create the Boyle County Leadership Academy this year to nurture the talent within their own schools.

Assistant Superintendent Mike LaFavers explained the program during a clinic at KSBA's annual conference last month.

"The kind of culture I think we're all looking for is high expectations, no excuses, where kids come first," he said. "And when you find a high-performing school, no matter how you measure success ... you'll find they have a culture of high expectations."

LaFavers said policy and budget decisions can have only a limited effect on school culture, but effective leadership can pick up where those other areas fall short.

"A lot of what we do in Leadership Academy is teach skills: using classroom technology, time management skills, making effective lesson plans," he said. "Those skills can be taught."

A big part of the academy is to recognize and encourage talent.

"You can't teach talent, but you can create high expectations and you can teach skills and knowledge," LaFavers said.



Pamela Morehead-Johnson, left, an Eminence Independent board member, pairs up with Breathitt County board member Shirley Hudson for a five-minute learning exercise during Boyle County Schools' presentation about its Learning Academy.

David Young, first-year principal at Junction City Elementary, said the academy works by recruiting five or six staff members from each school who volunteer to meet once a month for two hours after school.

"Each session ends with a homework session," Young said. "We're not just in there talking about theory, about what would be great; we actually make plans. When they come back next month, we follow up and see if they've done these things in their building and we discuss them."

He said they also develop action items for each topic that will assist in future planning.

"For example, if we talk about culture and climate, Junction City goes away with that and develops, under certain guidelines, a plan that fits our school," he said. "While we are all working on the same thing, the plans are individualized for each school."

Young said monthly meetings also feature different central office administrators who explain what their job entails.

"You'd be surprised in Boyle County that sometimes those are things that teachers don't know," he said.

Young, who compared being a principal to being on an island with no one to talk to or share ideas with, said the academy is already making a difference in his school.

"The most effective leadership you can have is from within, and if you have teachers and other staff members who have the same goals you have as an administrator and you're all pushing in the same direction, then you can really make a district move quickly," he said. ☘

"You can't teach talent, but you can create high expectations and you can teach skills and knowledge."

— Mike LaFavers, Boyle County Schools assistant superintendent, describing one of the missions of the district's Leadership Academy

KSBA's 73rd annual conference



'Lincoln' makes special appearance at KSBA conference

Tall and thin almost gaunt, dressed in a long black coat and vest and carrying a black felt stovepipe hat, Jim Sayre certainly looked the part for his presentation on the life of Abraham Lincoln.

When the Lawrenceburg resident opened his monologue to close the KSBA conference Sunday brunch, he took on his character as if addressing reporters on the day of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

Sprinkling his remarks with dozens of Kentucky references and remembrances, Lincoln/Sayre recounted the Bluegrass state native's life from birth through the day the Civil War battlefield national cemetery was dedicated in 1863.

Kentucky superintendent vacancies

Marion County Board of Education

3,225 (K-12) www.marion.kyschools.us

The Marion County School District seeks as its next superintendent an innovative and highly motivated candidate who is eager to take the district to the highest levels of achievement in all areas. The successful candidate should demonstrate a distinguished level of skill in obtaining high-quality academic achievement for all students, in communicating internally with staff and externally to the public, and in planning and organizing. **Application deadline is Feb. 23, 2009.**

McCracken County Schools

6,945 (K-12) www.mccracken.kyschools.us

The McCracken County Board of Education is seeking an outstanding innovative educational leader for its next superintendent. This individual should continue the current momentum of the district through leadership that oversees continuing improvement of student achievement, and a reconfiguration of building grade levels, along with strong communication skills. **Application deadline: March 27, 2009.**

Mercer County Schools

3,179 (PS-12) www.mercer.kyschools.us

The Mercer County Board of Education is seeking as its next superintendent an educational leader who is student-centered with evidence of meeting the needs of all students. The successful candidate should have administrative experience and good oral communication skills and be an effective motivator. **Application deadline April 13, 2009.**

Monroe County Board of Education

2,033 (PS-12) www.monroe.kyschools.us

The Monroe County Board of Education seeks as its next superintendent a qualified highly motivated and energetic candidate who is eager to take the district to a top 10 performing school district in the state of Kentucky. **Application deadline is Feb. 27, 2009.**

Morgan County Board of Education

2,115 (K-12) www.morgan.kyschools.us

The Morgan County Board of Education is seeking an outstanding educational leader who is student centered and with the ability to continue to move the district forward. To lead this district, a candidate needs to be motivational and possess integrity and a high level of fairness. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. **Screening Committee's first meeting is Feb. 25, 2009.**

Taylor County Schools

2,596 (PS - 12) www.taylor.kyschools.us

The Taylor County Board of Education seeks a strong innovative educational leader to serve as its next superintendent. Applicants must hold Kentucky superintendent certification or be eligible for same. **Application deadline: April 10, 2009.**

Williamstown Independent Schools

887 (K-12) www.williamstown.kyschools.us

The Williamstown Board of Education seeks as its next superintendent a qualified and highly motivated candidate who is eager to continue moving the district to even higher levels of achievement in all areas. **Application deadline: Feb. 23, 2009.**

To apply and receive further information, send seven collated copies of a letter of application, application form, resume and three letters of recommendation to:

(Insert district vacancy you are applying for)
Kentucky School Boards Association
260 Democrat Drive
Frankfort, KY 40601

Tomorrow through the eyes, minds and fingers of students

By Brad Hughes
KSBA Member Support Services Director

After every KSBA annual conference, one slightly dazed colleague asks another, “What was the highlight of this conference for you?”

Not surprisingly, many of my 2009 memories are weather-related.

One was of watching Oldham County board member Larry Dodson pop in and out of sessions between shifts working with his utility company teammates to restore power to some of the 700,000 Kentuckians left in the dark and cold. At one point, he confided that he hadn’t slept in his own bed in six days.

Another came from Paducah Independent board member Felix Akojie, whose trip from a powerless home to Louisville over three interstates and parkways left him joking Saturday evening, “Can we hold the conference over two to three more days?”

And then there was the ID badge-wearing coworker who told of being confronted by a couple who had checked into the Galt House when the storm cut off their power. They had to move out as conference registrants showed up to claim their reservations, leaving the man to ask, “Are you part of that group that’s why I had to give up my room?”

But my most lasting memory happened Saturday afternoon as I shuffled down the cavernous and nearly empty hallway outside the hotel’s ballrooms. Two women were standing in front of one of the student-made banners suspended along the corridor.

I had seen this banner when we were setting up Thursday. From Elizabethtown Independent, the scene depicted a child in a dark suit standing atop a stack of textbooks in front of a full-length mirror (pictured at right). The reflection the artist had drawn was that of President Barack Obama.

As I passed, one woman said to the other, “That says it all, doesn’t it?”

And so began my odyssey among more than 100 4-foot-by-5-foot works of art capturing the theme, “Students Today, Leaders Tomorrow.”

They got it

I strolled up and down the hallway and the walls of the grand ballroom for another look at the student work I thought I had seen for the past three days.

Turns out, I had been looking, but I hadn’t been seeing. I hadn’t seen...

...the Monroe County banner of students Bill, Martha and Colin seated at desks beneath the images of Microsoft founder Bill Gates, former Kentucky Gov. Martha Layne Collins and ex-Secretary of State and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Colin Powell.

...the Augusta Independent artwork featuring four students in one scene but in another, their images as adults adorning

Mount Rushmore.

...the Edmonson County display of maps bordered with the names of graduates who become a U.S. senator, World Series baseball player, mayor, veterans of various wars and a state banjo champion.

...the Ballard County painting of children playing with toy cars, one using a stick to draw in the dirt while a thought bubble above him

filled with a futuristic car design.

...the Union County offering of student pictures as pieces of a jigsaw puzzle atop a second section of puzzle pieces labeled teacher, CEO, bank manager, supervisor, judge and doctor.

And dozens more – sadly, too many for this space to name – featuring scenes of students pondering futures as everything from scientists, engineers and surgeons to police officers, underwater welders and parents.

It left me wondering what I had been missing at all those past conferences when I failed to stop and see what those kids were saying.

The Last Word

When each year’s conference planning committee adopts its theme, it has some message it wants to communicate. A vision. An emphasis. A projection of thought. One never knows how students will translate their perceptions of what the adults were thinking. The most frequent realization is the incredible variety of images students create from a simple combination of five to seven words.

This year, though, the banners didn’t capture the adults’ concept. They created their own.

The banners showed their vision of tomorrow. They depicted their emphasis on success in life after school. They illustrated their thoughts of hope, their dreams about tomorrow. The images portrayed hard work ahead of them, resulting from learning grounded in Kentucky public schools.

And that’s a message worth getting out. ☘



The students who created the banner are: Rachel Brown, Courtney Cheatwood, Jack Edmonds, Whitney Johnson, Jessica Kendall, Steven Oldham, Lauren Pack, Paige Raine, Aimee Simes, Brittnie Stull, Bethany Thompson, Caitlyn Tully, and Rachel Urban.

GOT TALENT?

Kentucky students show off their skills during KSBA's annual conference in Louisville



A highlight of KSBA's conference each year is the variety of student performances attendees are treated to. This year was no different, with students fighting their way through the snow and ice across the state to share their talents in Louisville last month.

(Clockwise from top left) Students from Whitley County Schools Colonel's Strings group perform during the President's Reception on Saturday evening.

Members of the Madison Southern High School Show Choir entertain during the Saturday luncheon.

Bethany Gerald, a Monroe County Middle School student, kicks off the conference with a rousing version of the national anthem.

The Kenton County Select Chorus was the bookend of the conference, performing at the closing Sunday brunch.

What they saw at the inauguration



Frankfort Independent was among several Kentucky school districts to send students to the inauguration of President Barack Obama. Frankfort High School traditionally has sent a group and, with the help of donations, this historic inauguration was no exception.

One of the five bus loads of Frankfort students happened to be taking pictures in front of the White House the next day just as the limo containing the new president pulled into the entry gates. Obama gave the group of 50 or so a wave – and a big thrill, according to Superintendent Rich Crowe's blog.

Clockwise, from top left, student Michael Rawlings looks from the window of his bus at buildings decorated for the occasion.

The Frankfort delegation staked out a position on the Mall. The onlookers who climbed the trees gave the group a “play by play” of what was happening, said Barbara Martin, the district's interpreter for the deaf, who accompanied them.

Students, who also got to watch the inaugural parade, were “packed in like sardines” on the street, Martin said. Note the orange glove at the center. Students and chaperones wore orange gloves (a school color) to keep tabs on each other's whereabouts.



Photos provided by Frankfort High School



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